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Statement submitted by Krityanand UNESCO Club Jamshedpur, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

"Empowering Women — Empowering Humanity: Picture It!"

The Krityanand UNESCO Club began to give special attention to gender equality, but emphasis on this issue increased markedly after the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. As a defining framework for change, the Platform for Action made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern. Even 20 years later, it remains a powerful source of guidance and inspiration. The Platform imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realize all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work. Today, despite considerable progress, the Platform's envisioned gender equality in all dimensions of life is still an unfinished agenda particular in developing nations. Women earn less than men and are more likely to work in poor-quality jobs. A third suffers physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Gaps in reproductive rights and health care leave 800 women dying in childbirth each day.

The 20th anniversary of Beijing opens new opportunities to reconnect, regenerate commitment, charge up political will and mobilize the public. Everyone has a role to play — for our common good.

We all have a responsibility to keep pushing ahead for full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, because every time a woman or girl is held back by discrimination or violence, humanity loses.

The Platform imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realize all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work. The Beijing process unleashed remarkable political will and worldwide visibility. It connected and reinforced the activism of women's movements on a global scale.

Conference participants went home with great hope and clear agreement on how to achieve equality and empowerment. Since then, governments, civil society and the public have translated the Platform's promises into concrete changes in individual countries. These have ushered in enormous improvements in women's lives. More women and girls than at any previous point in time serve in political offices, are protected by laws against gender-based violence, and live under constitutions guaranteeing gender equality.

Urgent action is needed for Beijing Platform for Action

The new development framework must be grounded in the universal human rights framework. Any new framework of goals, targets and indicators must fully reflect the fundamental human rights principles of universality, indivisibility, equality, non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability. It must also clearly state that existing international law and human rights norms, standards and commitments set the baseline for the new agenda for women development and each focus area. Recognising that the respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights should be both the purpose and the ultimate litmus test of success for the post-2015 development agenda.

Improving women's access to resources

Women continue to have less access than men to a range of productive resources, including education, health care, land, decent work, information, and financial resources.

Assisting countries in reducing inequalities in access to education

There is urgent need for undeveloped community education projects and activities aimed at reducing gender disparities in education, for providing stipends to families to cover the educational cost of school attendance for girls; training and hiring more female teachers; building and improving school sanitary facilities; and providing a clean water source for girls who need to carry water home after school.

Women with improved access to productive resources

To provide women with access to productive resources has a direct and positive impact on economic growth and on reducing poverty, while increasing women's economic opportunities and empowerment. Many societies have institutions and practices that limit women's access to productive assets and resources, such as land ownership, financial services, and formal sector employment. Water and sanitation, transport, rural and urban development, energy, and private sector development work seeks to improve women's access to productive resources on multiple fronts.

Water and sanitation sector

Women and men usually have very different roles in water and sanitation activities — with women most often being the providers and managers of domestic water supply in rural households and the guardians of household hygiene — we need innovative approaches to integrate gender issues into water and sanitation facilities.

Strengthen women's voice and power to influence

Women's ability to influence decisions in the community and nation is often limited by a lack of access to voice and decision making power. Although women have gained the right to vote in nearly all countries, there are still large gender disparities in political participation and representation at all government levels — from local councils to national assemblies.

Women's access to legal services

Governments need to strengthen legal and judicial systems to provide the good governance that is needed for development of women. A strong legal framework that reflects commitments and gender-sensitive enforcement mechanisms also need to contribute significantly to the promotion and protection of women's welfare and their social, economic, and political rights.

Assist women in post-conflict settings

Since Beijing, there has been increased recognition that conflict and wars, both interstate and intrastate, have different implications for women and men. For women, the consequences have included rape and torture, displacement, lack of

access to health services, increased vulnerability to HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, mental health disorders, and social isolation of widows and the sexually abused. The interests and effectiveness of women and men in peace making and reconstruction also differ. In 2000, the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 called on all actors involved in negotiating and implementing peace agreements to adopt a gender perspective that considers the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction.

We need our commitment strongly for the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development.

It is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women. The implementation of the Platform for Action requires commitment from Governments and the international community. By making national and international commitments for action, including those made at the Conference, Governments and the international community recognizes the need to take priority action for the empowerment and advancement of women according to their own situation and community.

The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, in cooperation with Governments, are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action.

We need strong comprehensive policy programme for mainstreaming the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system, including activities with regard to advisory services, technical assistance, reporting methodology, gender-impact assessments, coordination, public information and human rights education, and play an active role in the implementation of the programme; need effective mechanisms for investigating violations of the human rights of women perpetrated by any public official and take the necessary punitive legal measures in accordance with national laws.